Spring Cleaning your Mental Health

Now that the threat of the big snow storm has passed and spring is almost here, it is time to take inventory of your mental health and make some healthy changes. Spring is a time for growth and awareness. Making changes can be both comforting and energizing.

Try these 10 tips to improve your mental health:

1. Find a hobby. Hobbies are one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to nurture your mental health. Hobbies can include creative projects, physical activities, competitions, music, and much more. Hobbies can improve your emotional and physical well-being including, stress reduction, decreased depression, social life, and memory.

2. Give back. Volunteering your time helps you to focus your energy on something or someone other than yourself that may be less fortunate than you. Helping others can make you feel good, and it is also a great way to meet new people and not feel so isolated. Choose something you love, such as helping children, animals, the homeless, or a cause that is close to your heart.

3. Get organized. A lack of clutter brings comfort and a sense of peace to our lives. Start small and pick one thing or area of your home to organize. Pick an area that you regularly look at, organize it, and then notice how you feel. Once you have accomplished one space, choose another. Getting overwhelmed just by thinking about it? Take a break, step back and start again.

4. Open the windows and air out your home. Physically letting the outside in has a calming effect. It can be very good for your physical health to get rid of all the stale air and germs from so many days of being stuck in doors with the windows closed.

5. Make one positive change in your diet. Trying to change your entire way of eating can be overwhelming and cause stress, and often lead to not following through. If we give ourselves too many things to change at once and we don’t stick with it, we often just give up. Pick just one thing, for example drinking more water. Start slowly and give it three weeks to stick before you go onto the next change.
6. **Enjoy the outdoors.** Take a walk, sit outdoors, ride a bicycle. The fresh air, sunshine, and all the beautiful colors of spring help to reduce depression and stress. Take advantage or the longer days. More sunlight makes it easier to get outdoors before and after work.

7. **Enjoy shopping at the farmer’s market.** Spring is an easy time to eat healthier by adding lots of fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet. Eating more fruits and vegetables will not only help you shed that winter weight, it will help you have a sharper mind.

8. **Start exercising.** Sounds overwhelming? Begin slowly and think about building exercise into your daily routine. You don’t have to go to a gym for two hours to get a healthy workout. Research has shown that short bursts of exercise can be just as beneficial. You want to get your heart rate up – so climb the stairs at work, take a short brisk walk at lunch, or go for a short run. Try to find an exercise that gets your heart pumping. Aerobic exercise reduces stress and improves your mental health. It takes time for a new behavior to stick, so don’t give up. Give it three weeks to become a habit. **To help you stick with it put your exercise in your calendar and treat it like a meeting.**

9. **Remember that you are only human.** Lawyers tend to put a lot of stress on themselves in an attempt to be perfect and not make mistakes. Remembering that you are human and will make mistakes will reduce your stress. We all make mistakes; so learn from them, let go and move on.

10. **Take some time for just you.** Sometimes we just have to say “no” and take things off our plates. Being assertive can be hard, but loading up your schedule doesn't allow you time to relax and breathe. We all have busy schedules, but we all can probably take one thing off our plates that don’t need to be there. So the next time someone asks you to take on a significant new responsibility, tell them you will think about it and get back to them. Look at what is important in your life, and ask if accepting this new responsibility will get in the way of doing what is most important to you. Remember that if you don’t take care of yourself, you won’t be able to take care of anyone else.

If you would like to talk more about spring cleaning your mental health please contact the Lawyer Assistance Program for free, confidential assistance.

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